Direct Link Service to Kutch Passengers

352. SHRIMATI URMILABEN CHIMANBHAI PATEL: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether there have been representations for providing direct link service to Kutch passengers with Mumbai-Ahmedabad-Sharjah and Delhi-Ahmedabad-Muscat sector flights for a long time;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the action taken or proposed to be taken by government in this regard; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM): (a) to (d) The air service requirements of Kutch passengers are essentially catered through Ahmedabad Airport. Ahmedabad is connected to Dubai via Mumbai/Delhi thrice a week and to Muscat via Mumbai twice a week by Air India services.

Construction of air-strip in Sikkim

353. DR. MOHAN BABU:
DR. Y. LAKSHMI PRASAD:
SHRIMATI JAYAPRADA NAHATA:

Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to construct an air-strip in Sikkim;

(b) if so, the details thereof including the cost of site; and

(c) when the air-strip would be operational to boost tourism?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM): (a) to (c) No, Sir. Due to the hilly terrain, a suitable site for constructing an airport at a reasonable cost has not been identified so far.

Seizure of Gold Biscuits and Foreign Currency

354. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that gold worth Rs. 1.10 crore in the form of biscuits was seized in July and gold worth over 31.5 Kgs. recovered in August, 1996 from four passengers who arrived in India from Kazakhstan apart from reported seizure of "foreign currency worth Rs. 2.70 crore" as per newsitem published in the Hindustan Times dated 3rd November, 1996;

(b) if so, the details thereof and reasons for increase in such cases recently; and

(c) what preventive measures Government have taken in this regard including action against culprits and officials involved?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) Yes Sir.

(b) The details of the three cases are given below:—

(i) 184 gold biscuits worth Rs. 1.10 crores were seized from Lufthansa Airlines flight LH.760 which arrived from Frankfurt at IGI Airport, Delhi on 9.7.96. The gold biscuits were concealed in the food trollies of the aircraft. Two passengers and four catering staff were arrested for their involvement in the case.

(ii) 31.5 Kgs. of gold biscuits, totally valued at Rs. 1.62 crores were seized on 26.8.96 from four passengers who had arrived by Kazakshtan Airlines Charter flight No. KZA-1911 at IGI Airport. All the four passengers alongwith the person who was to receive smuggled gold were arrested.

(iii) On 2.11.96 a passenger was intercepted at IGI Airport while leaving for Bangkok by Thai Airways flight TG 315 & foreign currency worth Rs. 2.71 crores in various denominations was recovered from him. An employee of Thai Airways and one more person found involved in the case have been arrested.

The increase in the number of Seizure cases is due to successful targetting of intelligence and increased vigil by the Customs staff at the I.G.I. Airport.

(c) Field formations are alert to detect and prevent smuggling including smuggling of gold and foreign currency. The measures taken in this regard include targetting of intelligence, use of modern equipments like X-ray Mechines and metal detectors. The culprits including passangers, catering staff and airline staff found involved in smuggling are being prosecuted. Persons found involved in gold smuggling have been detained under Cofeposa.

Central Financial Assistance sanctioned, released and utilised for Tourism in Gujarat

355. SHRI AHMED PATEL: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) details of the central financial assistance sanctioned, released and utilised for promotion of tourism in the State of Gujarat during the last three years, year wise;

(b) what infrastructural development for tourism was created with the central assistance in the State during the said period;

(c) whether it is fact that Government of Gujarat did not fully utilise the amount released by the Central Government for promotion of tourism in the State during the said period; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and steps taken by the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND THE MINISTER OF TOURISM (SHRI SRIKANTA JENA): (a) and (b) Department of Tourism, Government of India has sanctioned the following projects in the State of Gujarat during the last 3 years.

S.No.	Name of the Project/Schemes	Amount sanctioned	Amount released (Rs. in lakhs)
1993-94			
1.	Tourist Complex at Nalsarovar	19.68	10.00
2.	Cafetaria at Porbandar	14.60	7.50
3.	Floodlighting of Somnath Temple	17.46	8.00
4.	Two Units of Spirit Type land sailing Yacht	4.48	4.48
5.	Navratri festival	1.85	1.00
6.	Tarnetar fair	2.69	1.50
7.	Publicity Support	5.00	3.00
	TOTAL	65.76	35.48